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ABSTRACT

Any change in education that is for the purpose of improving the quality of learning experiences must either grow out of internalized changes on the part of those who must put the change into effect and support it; or must be brought about in such a way that local staffs and community members achieve necessary internalized changes in their values, beliefs, understanding, and objectives. Without such internalization, change becomes merely a structural or substitution type of modification which will probably not persist. (Author/WM)

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WHO'S CHANGING WHAT, AND WHY?

An Address prepared for the Annual Conference of the National Association of Elementary School Principals, Anaheim, California, 27 April to 2 May, 1974

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We educators are great ones for re-inventing educational wheels that don't go anywhere -- or at least very far. Over the past half-century I have witnessed, read about, and on occasion even aided and abetted a seemingly endless procession of "plans" (we now call them innovations), each of which was heralded as a new educational panacea, a breakthrough to greener educational pastures, a solution (at last!) to one or another of the problems that have perennially beset our efforts to educate new generations of capable, moral, productive citizens. We have had (or been had by) the Gary Plan, the Winnetka Plan, the Pueblo Plan, the Batavia Plan, the Portland Plan, the Detroit Plan, the Cooperative Group Plan, and the Non-Graded Plan, among others. (That last one, incidentally, was introduced in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, before World War II, at about the same time that John Goodlad got his first teaching job up in British Columbia.) More lately, we have seen, heard, or read about the New Math, the New Science, the New Physics, the New Biology, Team Teaching, Individually Prescribed Instruction (I.P.I.), Individually Guided Education (I.G.E.), behavioral objectives, differentiated staffing, the open classroom, the inquiry curriculum, modular scheduling, programed instruction, and an amorphous indefinition called "school without walls." Amid them all, I frequently get the feeling of having been there before; for when I peer behind the labels and rhetoric of the "new departures," I often find that they are old wine in new bottles, different names for educational nostrums that have been tried before. Here are a few examples.

Performance objectives are having quite a vogue right now. As I understand the meaning of the term, this means stating specifically what a learner should be able to do as a result of a given educational strategy or process. Back in the 1920's, Carleton Washburne was telling us that in the schools of Winnetka, Illinois, "instead of saying that before leaving third grade, a child should be able to do third grade arithmetic, we say that before leaving third grade, a child should be able to add columns of digits three digits wide, and four digits wide, at the rate of three in three minutes, with one hundred per cent accuracy." If that's not a performance objective, I'm a cross-eyed bumblebee. Objectives of this kind were the central feature of Washburne's Winnetka Plan in 1925.

In 1934, I started my teaching career as one of the teachers in a "Hosic Cooperative Unit" in an elementary school in Delaware. This was a plan of team teaching developed by James Hosic of Columbia University's Teachers College, back in 1929; it was essentially the same as today's team teaching plans, such as that featured in the multi-unit school plan. (1)*

Similarly, one can find antecedents for today's proposals for individualized instruction in Helen Parkhurst's Dalton Plan and the Decroly Method of a half-century ago. (2) Precursors of the "open classroom" we hear so much about today can be found in John Dewey's Chicago Elementary School, Caroline Pratt's "Play School" in the early 1920's in New York (which became the Town and Country School), the "Child Centered School" of Harold Rugg in 1928, and the Activity Movement of the 1920's and 30's, (3). Another of today's watchwards is

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* Numbers in parentheses refer to footnotes at the end of this paper

change; in the past few years we have had a flood of articles and books about education for change. Perhaps before we charge off in all directions to invent change wheels all over again, we should read, or reread, William Heard Kilpatrick's Education for a Changing Civilization, published in 1926.

I do not mean to imply that there is nothing creative or useful about current efforts at educational reform. My main point is that the highly creative innovations of the 1920's and 30's are so little known today. In one sense, they have failed, for they did not persist, did not diffuse throughout American Schools. The same can be said for most of their reincarnations today, for there is ample evidence that many of today's "innovations" are not succeeding either. In his little book, Behind the Classroom Door, John Goodlad and his associates report their conclusions from visits to 260 classrooms in several score of school districts in more than a dozen states throughout the nation. Many of these districts had reputations for being innovative. One of the major conclusions of the study was the "highly recommended and publicized innovations of the past decade or so were dimly conceived and, at best, partially implemented by the schools claiming them." (4) Other studies have found similarly discouraging results concerning innovations in the schools.

Kinds of Change

It is probably safe to say that a major reason for these discouraging results is that we educators are not very knowledgeable about what change really is, what it involves, and how it takes place. As a

result, the wrong people try to make major educational changes, and go about it in the wrong way, often for the wrong reasons. To understand this, it may be helpful to take a look at different kinds of change. We can think of educational change as coming in three different varieties: structural change, superficial substitution, and personally internalized change.

Structural Change. The first of these is what may be called "structural change." This is change in form, or arrangement, or organization. For example, arranging for blacks and whites to go to the same schools is a structural change. Changing a school from self-contained classroom organization to a departmentalized or team teaching organization is structural (though it may -- and should -- be more than that). Changing from heterogeneous to homogeneous grouping (or vice-versa), or from age-grade grouping to interage grouping, is structural. Rearranging the subject-matter in the curriculum is structural. Any of these changes may be changes in the arrangement, the structuring of groups of children or teachers, of space or curriculum content, without necessarily resulting in any change in the quality of the pupils' educational experiences, or in their achievement. Research findings bear ample witness to this.

Superficial Substitution. A second type of change may be called superficial substitution. This refers to the process of replacing that which exists in an educational situation with something else, without any basic understanding of the philosophic or psychological reasons for the change, or without making fundamental changes in the nature

of the teaching-learning experiences of the children and teachers. Examples of this would be changing the textbooks being used, or using television presentations of subject-matter instead of live presentations or using videotapes instead of motion pictures. Another example would be a teacher's substituting different teaching techniques for those he has been using (such as adopting programed learning materials and techniques), because a supervisor told him to do so, or because something he read said it was a good idea. Such substitutions can be made without appreciably improving the learning experiences of pupils in the class.

Internalized, Insightful Change. Finally, there is change that comes about because the person himself, or herself, has changed. A good example of this is the difference between racial desegration and integration. Desegregation of a school is a structural change. Difficult as it may be (and it often is!), it is little more than a rearrangement of pupils of different races. The integration of the ethnic and racial groups in our society, on the other hand, requires internalized change. We can have desegregation without integration, as we have seen all too often. When we achieve integration, desegregation will take care of itself.

Basic, lasting educational change, like racial integration, requires internalized change in people. Ideally, it should happen because of such internalized change. In schools, for example, teachers and principals may become dissatisfied with the program of teaching-learning experiences of children. This dissatisfaction may arise because the staff have come to understand better how children learn, or because of changes in their values, perceptions and beliefs

about what it is important for children to learn, or because of richer, fuller, more insightful understandings of the nature of individual differences, and the implications for the instructional process. It may stem from a better understanding of the meaning of the statement that, "I can't really teach anybody anything; I can only help him learn." In other words, internalized, insightful change refers to fundamental changes in people's assumptions, beliefs, values, convictions, objectives. These are the "rudders" of behavior; any change in them will inevitably lead to changes in a person's behavior.

All three of these types of changes are legitimate; all three of them can serve valid purposes. Furthermore, they overlap and interpenetrate. But only the last one, internalized, insightful change, is likely to result in significant improvement in the quality of children's learning experiences in school. Consequently, any change in education that is for the purpose of improving the quality of those learning experiences must either grow out of internalized changes on the part of those who must put the change into effect and support it; or must be brought about in such a way that local staffs and community members achieve necessary internalized changes in their values, beliefs, understandings and objectives. If change is "implemented" or "installed" without such internalized changes having taken place, it is almost certain to turn out to be merely a structural or substitution type of change, which will not affect the learning experiences of the children significantly, and probably will not persist.

Who's Changing What, and Why?

The foregoing is only the prelude to the topic of this paper, Who's Changing What and Why? (I might add, and How?) There have

recently been a number of reports of studies of the change process in schools where there have been attempts to bring about significant change in instructional organization and method. (4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11). From these studies, it is clear that most change in education results from pressures outside the school. That is, the decision to make the change is made by people who are not working in the school buildings in which the change is to be brought about. Typically, the change proposals have their origins in the community, in boards of education, or among personnel in the central office of the school system. A "plan" is conceived, refined, and approved by the school authorities, and then is "installed" in the schools (often without realization, apparently, that this is far more complex than installing a new boiler, or other equipment). Usually this is a plan, or a modification of a plan, that was developed elsewhere, such as the team teaching plan developed in Lexington, Massachuseetts, the I.P.I. Plan developed at the University of Pittsburgh, the Multi-Unit/I.G.E. Plan devised by the R. and D. Center in Madison, Wisconsin, or the New Math as presented in a publisher's textbook series. The resulting plan is then revealed to community members, and to the school staffs, explaining to them what the plan is, how it works, and when and how it is to be "installed". The installation commonly includes an in-service program to teach teachers and others how to make the plan work. The research studies of innovation efforts referred to above indicate that this process has not been very successful in bringing about lasting, effective improvements in education.

Reasons for Disappointing Results

From the studies of innovations, it appears obvious that one of the major reasons why educational change efforts have been disappointing is that all too often the wrong people have assumed responsibility for making the changes, going about it in the wrong way, and often for the wrong reasons. Obviously, there are many factors involved in the success or failure of an educational innovation. It would seem almost ridiculously evident, however, that if an educational change is to be more than simply a change in structure, or a superficial substitution, there must be thorough (and I mean thorough) understanding and support on the part of those who are basically responsible for making the change effective. Ordinarily, this means the school building staff. It is they -- the teachers, the principal, the teachers' aides, the learning resources coordinator or librarian -- who in the last analysis must make the change, both in themselves and in the teaching-learning program. Desirably, changes in instructional organization and method should result from dissatisfaction on the part of the school's staff with aspects of the program currently in operation. It should come about as a result of changes in staff beliefs about the educational objectives they should be striving to achieve, or changed perceptions about the kinds of teaching and learning experiences that will help achieve desired learning objectives.

Actually, this is the manner in which most "plans" come to be invented. If a successful educational invention is widely and effectively publicized, it is hailed as an innovation, and the bandwagon is off and running. Pressures from communities and school boards to

keep up with the educational Joneses, and from professional colleagues in universities and other school systems then lead school authorities to "install" the innovation in their schools, often by directive. For example, a principal in a recent summer session class of mine came to me and said, "I need some help. This past May, our superintendent told us that in September we are to go on the non-graded plan. I came to summer school to find out more about it, and how to go about it. Can you give me some suggestions?" This is what I mean by saying that all too often, the wrong people have initiated the change, in the wrong way and for the wrong reasons.

Two Approaches to Change

Major educational changes in a school come about in at least two ways. First, there is change decided upon by the school building staff, growing out of their own study of how to improve their instructional program in the school. Changes of this kind are usually (though not always) the result of changed internalized beliefs and attitudes on the part of the building staff, concerning educational objectives, or changed perceptions and beliefs about how children learn, or new insights into the effectiveness of different kinds of instructional strategies in helping reach instructional objectives. In changes of this kind, the changes in attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, values, and understandings come before the change plan.

The second approach is change which originates outside the school. Here, formulation of the change plan precedes the changes in attitudes, beliefs and understandings. Typically, central office staff members see considerable promise for program improvement in one or more educational innovations that have been introduced into other school systems, and wish to initiate such a change in their schools. Studies indicate that most "innovative" changes stem from this source. (4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10). These studies also reveal the problems encountered when change is of this "top downward" nature.

Both these ways of initiating change are legitimate; but when change is of the first type, a change which grows out of the motivation and insight of those who must put it into effect, half the battle has already been won. In either case, the foregoing discussion implies that if change is to be successful (i.e., accepted, effective, lasting), several important conditions must be present or provided for.

Conditions of Successful Change

Making changes in instructional organization and method is subject to what I call "McNally's Two Laws of Change." The first of these is that almost every change is more complicated than one thinks it is going to be. The Second Law, which follows naturally, is that almost every change takes longer than one thinks it will. Ask any principal who has tried to bring about significant change in a school's instructional program, and he will tell you that those are indeed valid laws. Educational change is incredibly complex and time consuming. Failure to understand this, and to consider instructional program change to be simply a structural modification, or a substituion that can be simply "installed," is a major reason for the

disappointing change results we have witnessed so often. Research suggests that there are at least five conditions that must be present if change is to be effective.

1. First the instructional staff must want change, must understand clearly the problem the change is intended to solve, and must have clear understandings of the role models, the instructional techniques, behaviors, strategies, that they will have to perform. This is a big order. It is subject to McNally's two Laws, for research and experience indicate clearly that its accomplishment takes from two to five years if the change is to be more than a simple re-structuring or substitution. It has to be understood with abundant clarity that the change has to be made by the instructional staff, not by the central office personnel or the principal. It has to be made by those who deal directly with the learners. This means, of course, that the instructional staff should be involved from the very beginning in helping to determine what needs to be changed, what the change shall be, and how it is to be developed and put into effect. Only in this way are they likely to develop gut-level understanding of what needs to be changed and why, of how and why the change will do a better job than present procedures, of just what it is that they will have to do that is different than what they are now doing, and of how they are to acquire the new skills and competencies required by the plan.

2. Second, successful change requires close, strong and continuous administrative support, which should take several forms. One of these is explicit administrative support that is a matter of record. Another is administrative provisions to help the implementers of the change (usually the teachers) to acquire the competencies, skills, behaviors, knowledges that are required for the new role models. Administrators must also provide the organizational conditions needed for the change. Some examples are: provision of planning time, of materials or equipment, of needed policy changes, of specialized assistance, and the development of a climate of acceptance and support on the part of parents, community, pupils and administrative-supervisory personnel. In this respect, the administrators (especially the principals) are not so much the makers of the change as the facilitators; the agents who skillfully develop dissatisfaction with the status quo, and who provide the conditions and support needed by the instructional staff as they work on bringing the change about and making it effective. (See especially footnotes 5 and 7 for discussions of this.) Myers suggests that the principal's role in the change process is that of a "procedural taskmaster." (10, p.50)

3. Third, it is most important to have community support for significant educational changes. Cremin has impressively documented how strongly social changes influence and permeate educational policy and practice. (12) The late Paul Mort, who spent most of his professional life studying educational change (he called it "adaptability"), emphasized that in the long run, a community gets the kind of education it

wants. Many an educational innovation has had to be abandoned, or so watered down as to unrecognizable, because of failure to observe this condition of change.

4. Fourth, remember McNally's Second Law of Change; most things take longer than we think they are going to, or should. Change in instructional organization and method is an extremely difficult and complicated undertaking. (13) The internalized changes in people that it requires do not take place easily or quickly. Deciding what change is needed; analyzing what it requires in resources, materials, arrangements, and inservice development of staff; obtaining understanding of new role models and helping teachers and others (including principals) learn to perform those role models; developing community understanding and readiness to support the change; all these take considerable time. As I mentioned earlier, a two to five year period is not an unrealistic estimate of the time needed from the proposal of the change to the time it has been fully incorporated, de-bugged, and evaluated for success. Change can be made more quickly, of course; but if it is, it probably means that the seeds of failure are being sown. Exceptions would be changes which require no more than simple re-structuring, or re-arranging, or which are intended to be simple substitutions. Even so, beware of McNally's First Law of Change!

Fifth and finally, careful provision must be built into the change plan to provide continuous feedback to facilitate formative evaluation. (14) Are the new materials satisfactory? Are more, or others needed? Do some teachers need more help in understanding and performing the changes instruc-

tional behaviors called for? What is happening to the children's learning outcomes as a result of the change? What problems are teachers, pupils and others encountering that need attention, that imply some needed changes in the original plan? One of the most persistent charges brought against educators is that they do not conduct careful and meaningful evaluations of changes of instructional methods, procedures and materials introduced into schools. (15) Current demands for accountability emphasize the importance of this.

The Principal's Leadership Role

I have suggested that in the last analysis it is the instructional staff who must make instructional program changes, and that they should be involved from the start in defining the need (or needs) for change, and the change designed to take care of it. When one makes such a statement, many immediately charge him with maintaining that the administrator -- in our case, the principal -- must abdicate his leadership function. Far from it. Such a charge reveals little understanding of the dimensions of leadership. To foster the kind of change process I have been discussing calls for far more skillful and difficult leadership than simple-minded approaches that ignore the complexities mentioned earlier. I have no formula, no simple prescription for how a principal should go about initiating change in his school. If I did, I would be contradicting McNally's First Law of Change! But the ideas I have developed here are by no means new. They were well summed up by the Chinese philosopher, Lao-tse, over 2500 years ago, when he said,

A leader is best
when people hardly know he exists;
not so good when people acclaim him;
worst when they despise him.

But of a good leader, who talks little,
when his work is done,
his aim fulfilled,
they will all say,
"We did this ourselves."

I can't say it any better.

1. James F. Hosic, The Cooperative Group Plan: Working Principles for the Organization of Elementary Schools. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1929

2. See, for example, Guy M. Whipple (ed.), Adapting the Schools to Individual Differences. Twenty-fourth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part II. Bloomington, Ill.: Public School Publishing Company, 1925.

3. Guy M. Whipple (ed), The Activity Movement. Thirty-third Yearbook of the National Society forthe Study of Education, Part II. Bloomington, Ill.: Public School Publishing Company, 1934

4. John I. Goodlad, M. Frances Klein, and Associates, Behind the Classroom Door. Worthington, Ohio: Charles A. Jones Publishing Company, 1970, p. 72.

5. W. W. Charters, Jr., et al., The Process of Planned Change in the School's Instructional Organization. Eugene, Oregon: Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration, University of Oregon, 1973

6. Ford Foundation, A Foundation Goes to School. New York: the Foundation, 1972.

7. Neal Gross, Joseph Giaquinta and Marilyn Bernstein, Implementing Organizational Innovations. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1971

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9. Matthew B. Miles (ed.), Innovation in Education. New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1965

10. Jerrold M. Novotney (ed.), The Principal and the Challenge of Change. Dayton, Ohio: Institute for the Development of Educational Activities (I/D/E/A), 1968

11. Louis M. Smith and Pat M. Keith, Anatomy of an Educational Innovation. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1971

12. Lawrence A. Cremin, The Transformation of the School. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961

13. Seymour B. Sarason, The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1971

14. For discussions of formative evaluation see: M. Scriven, "The Methodology of Evaluation," in R. E. Stake (ed.), AERA Monograph Series in Curriculum Evaluation, No. 1. Chicago; Rand McNally and Co., 1967; and Robert B. Howsam, "Current Issues in Evaluation." National Elementary Principal, 52:12-17, February, 1973

FOOTNOTES (continued)

15. Miriam L. Goldberg, "Evaluation of Innovations," in Marcella R. Lawler (ed.), Strategies for Planned Curricular Innovation. New York: Teachers College Press, 1971, Chapter Three; and Matthew B. Miles (ed.), Innovation in Education, New York: Teachers College Press, 1964, pp. 657-660